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ABSTRACT

The academic careers of City University of New York (CUNY) freshmen who enrolled during the initial years of the open-admissions policy were studied. For 1970, 1971, and 1972 entrants, educational attainments were measured through 1984. Attention was directed to: rates of graduation for undergraduate degrees after 12 or more years; how students accumulated credentials at various time intervals; the success of community college entrants in earning bachelor's degrees; and the proportions earning masters and professional degrees. Open-admissions students were compared with regular students who did not need the program to qualify for a place at CUNY. Since CUNY's policy was designed to expand educational opportunity for disadvantaged minority groups, data were assessed for the major ethnic constituencies of CUNY's entering classes (White, Black, and Hispanic students). Data were examined separately for CUNY's senior and community colleges. The effects of changes in financial aid on educational attainments were also considered. It was found that about 20% of regular students needed more than 5 years to earn the bachelor's degree, while among the open-admissions students, 40% needed more than 5 years to finish. (SW)

Long-Term Educational Attainment in an Open-Access University System: Effects of Ethnicity, Economic Status, and College Type.

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INTRODUCTION*

The 1960s and early 1970s were a time of intense national preoccupation with issues of equality of opportunity. Higher education was a major arena of this concern. It was expressed in the development of special outreach programs, and in the creation of a variety of state and federal financial aid programs that were in part designed to increase rates of college going among disadvantaged groups.

Higher education's most ambitious effort to expand educational opportunity was initiated in 1970 when the multi-campus system of the City University of New York (CUNY) launched an open-admissions policy that differed in important ways from other open-access models. Its admissions mechanism was designed to distribute students between the University's senior- and community-college tiers more equally than was the case in other open-access systems such as California's.[1] To further smooth the path toward CUNY's senior colleges, graduates of the community colleges, from both academic and career programs, were guaranteed admission to a four-year school with full credit. The University's concept of opportunity embraced not only access but also outcome: CUNY's colleges mounted large scale programs of compensatory education and

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supportive counseling that were designed to improve the probabilities of academic success. By increasing disadvantaged students' chances of obtaining undergraduate degrees, broader opportunity would be created for earning still further credentials (e.g., graduate degrees) that would add even more to their prospects in the labor market.

Though the CUNY policy was one of the leaders of the egalitarian currents of the 60s, it produced great concern in many quarters. One reason was the abruptness of the change: it transformed the University, almost overnight, from one of the nation's most selective institutions to its most accessible one. Serious questions were raised about the ability of the policy to reverse the effects of prior economic and educational disadvantages that had been especially severe for New York City's minority youth. Given their handicaps, there was concern as to whether the deluge of students would result in anything more than a trickle of graduates, or if it did, whether this could be accomplished without such a serious dilution of academic standards as to erode the value of the University's diplomas.

As a public university embarking on a costly program, CUNY's open-admissions policy came under especially intense scrutiny from local and state budget officials, legislators, and public education citizen's groups. The University was subjected to a glare of media attention, legislative hearings, and the like. Demands for data describing the results of the program were frequent, and they focussed especially on what is often viewed by colleges, students and the public as the bottom line of educational accounting: graduation and dropout rates.

Initial studies covering the first five years of the open-admissions policy

described and analyzed outcomes such as dropout and graduation in great detail (Lavin, Alba, and Silberstein, 1981). The research showed that graduation rates for open-admissions students were substantially lower than for regular students; i.e., the ones who would have qualified for entry to CUNY even under the rigorous admissions standards in force at the University during the 1960s. Indeed, over the first five years of the open-access policy, not even a third of the open-admissions students earned a diploma. On the other hand, the graduation rates of these students compared favorably with national rates for students with similar high school records. The analyses suggested that neither the view of open-admissions students as destined to failure, nor the view of the University as turning into a diploma mill reflected the realities of CUNY in the early years of the open-admissions policy.

These initial studies were bounded by the traditional yardstick used for judging success, the four- or five-year graduation rate. Changes in the demographics of higher education over the past 15 years suggest that such a conventional time frame may have become inappropriate. As barriers to college admission have fallen during this period, greater proportions of students have begun college with academic deficiencies and sharply limited economic resources. As a result they frequently are placed in required compensatory or remedial courses that carry little or no credit. Because of their difficult economic circumstances they often must work at an outside job while pursuing their studies. Sometimes the demands of work and college lead them to attend part-time or to interrupt their studies entirely for a semester or two, or even longer. In addition, many persons enroll in college after a hiatus of a few years following high school graduation. Recent evidence suggests that the proportion of students less than 20 years old enrolled in college has been declining steadily since 1970, reflecting the trend toward delayed

participation.[2] Such older students are more likely to be married and working, thus creating additional constraints upon full-time, uninterrupted college attendance. Each of these factors, either alone or in concert, may be expected to delay the time of graduation well beyond conventional expectations.

Adding to the difficulties experienced by these newer recruits to higher education are the obstacles created by the financial aid system. We suspect that this system penalizes open-access institutions and the students they attract because it is oriented toward the traditional student who attends full-time, receives parental support, and completes a degree in the conventional on-time period, or very close to it. To the extent that requirements are out of alignment with the needs of a growing proportion of the college eligible population, financial aid is likely to become a critical national issue over the next few years.

AIMS AND METHODS

To test the speculation that a more complete picture of students' attainments in higher education requires a longer time frame, we have extended the findings from our original studies that tracked the academic careers of three freshmen cohorts entering CUNY during the initial years of the open-admissions policy, 1970-1972. In those studies, graduation data covered five years for the 1970 entrants, four years for the 1971 freshmen, and three years for the 1972 cohort (Lavin, Alba, & Silberstein, 1981). For these cohorts, we have completed a follow-up survey that measured educational attainments through 1984, a period of 14 years for the 1970 entrants, 13 for the 1971 freshmen, and 12 for the 1972 contingent.

To the extent that open-admissions enhanced chances for earning undergraduate degrees, especially the baccalaureate, it also broadened opportunities for

entry to graduate study. The follow-up survey was designed to assess all educational attainments over this period, including degrees earned in non-CUNY institutions.[3] Using these newly collected data we shall address four broad questions: (1) After a period of twelve or more years, what were the rates of graduation for undergraduate degrees? (2) How long did it take to earn such degrees; that is how did students accumulate credentials at various time intervals? (3) How successful were community-college entrants in earning bachelor's degrees? (4) How far did students go in terms of their ultimate educational attainments; that is, what proportions were able to earn M.A.'s, advanced degrees, and professional degrees? In addressing these questions, we shall consider how the results reflect on the success of an open-access policy in adding to educational chances among the members of greatly disadvantaged groups. We shall also consider shifts in financial aid policy and their implications for educational attainment.

The data are organized in several ways. First, we have compared open-admissions students with so-called regular students who did not need the program to qualify for a place in the University.[4] Inasmuch as CUNY's policy was designed to expand educational opportunity for disadvantaged minority groups, we also present data for the major ethnic constituencies that comprise the bulk of CUNY's entering classes. The pertinent categories consist of white, black, and Hispanic students.[5] Since placement in four- or two-year colleges is generally believed to have substantially different consequences for students' subsequent educational trajectories, data are presented separately for CUNY's senior and community colleges.

RESULTS

The new data reveal dramatically that student progress toward graduation can extend over many years and thus, that the story of CUNY's open-access policy

requires a long time in the telling. In the CUNY senior colleges Table 1 shows that 45 percent of regular students graduated after four years, an additional 16 percent graduated after five years, and another 15 percent took more than five years to earn their bachelor's degrees, producing a total graduation rate of 76 percent. Among open-admissions students, only 13 ercent earned diplomas after four years, but an additional year almost doubled the graduation rate. After thirteen years another 17 percent had graduated, resulting in a total graduation rate of 42 percent. Looked at another way, about 20 percent of all regular graduates needed more than five years, while among the open-admissions graduates, 40 percent needed more than five years to finish.[6] Thus, additional time was more important for the open-admissions students. To further illustrate this we have calculated the ratio of graduation rates for open-admissions students to the rates for regular students.[7] The latter were almost 3.5 times as likely as open-admissions students to be on time graduates. After five years the rate for regulars was only 2.4 times that of open-admissions students, and after thirteen years, the ratio had dropped to less than 2 to 1. In short, over time there was a narrowing of the disparity in graduation rates between the two categories of students.

In the community colleges, it is also clear that an extended time perspective is critically important for an accurate assessment of the graduation picture. As Table 2 shows, on time graduation rates were quite low: only 26 percent of regular students and but 10 percent of the open-admissions contingent earned degrees after two years.[8] An additional year added another 19 percent to the rate for regular students (from 26 to 45 percent). For open-admissions students an extra year produced more than a doubling of graduation rates (from 10 to 23 percent). An additional two years saw a further jump in the rates: after 5 years 51 percent of re[illegible] students and 30 percent of the open-admissions

group had received their Associate degrees. Students continued to graduate beyond this time, so that after thirteen years, 58 percent of regulars and 38 percent of the open-admissions students completed their community college studies.

As in the senior colleges, there was, in the two-year schools, a dramatic narrowing over time of the gap in graduation ratios between open-admissions students and their regular classmates. The latter were 2.6 times as likely to graduate after two years; after three years they were less than twice as likely to graduate, and the gap between the two groups narrowed to 1.5 after thirteen years. Almost 40 percent of the open-admissions graduates needed more than three years to earn their degrees, compared with 22 percent of regular students. That community-college students, and especially the open-admissions contingent, continued to graduate in substantial proportions even four or more years after entry appears quite remarkable, given the conventional wisdom about the typical length of time to earn a degree in a two-year institution.

Ethnic Differences

One of the most important aims of the open-admissions policy was to equalize educational opportunity for youth in New York City's minority communities. The entry of these students increased strikingly as a result of open admissions. But relative to whites, minority students came to CUNY with severe handicaps of economic status and academic preparation. As one might expect given these inequities, whites in CUNY's senior colleges were more likely to earn a B.A. degree than were minorities. Their five-year graduation rates were higher than those of the minority students, blacks and Hispanics (Table 3). Among regular students 65 percent of whites had graduated after five years compared with less than 40 percent of blacks and one third of Hispanics. Among white open-admissions students, the five-year rate was 33 percent, compared with 16

percent for blacks and 12 percent among Hispanics. Consideration of a longer time period reveals an important story about group differences in graduation rates. Among senior-college regular graduates, 18 percent of whites needed more than five years to complete their degrees. The comparable figures for minorities were 42 percent for blacks and 34 percent for Hispanics. Among open-admissions graduates 31 percent of whites took more than five years to finish. Much larger proportions of minority graduates needed additional time: 57 percent of blacks and Hispanics earned their degrees more than 5 years after entry.

In short, additional time appears to be especially important for minority students. As a result, initial ethnic differences in graduation rates at the end of five years are dramatically reduced after thirteen years.

Even in the community colleges minority graduates were disproportionately likely to earn degrees more than 5 years after entry. Calculations we have made from Table 4 indicate, for example, that among white regular graduates, 10 percent needed more than five years to earn their Associate degrees, while the comparable minority figures are 21 percent for Blacks and 13 percent for Hispanics. Among the open-admissions group, 24 percent of black graduates needed more than five years to complete their degrees. Among Hispanics the figure was 35 percent, more than twice as great as the figure for white graduates: 15 percent.

OPEN ACCESS AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

For many years now controversy has swirled around community colleges and their role in facilitating socioeconomic mobility or, alternatively, in reproducing class and ethnic inequalities.[9] The issue has special relevance for CUNY and

its open-admissions policy.

Both in terms of its admissions criteria (which aimed to produce greater equality in the distribution of students between the senior and community colleges than was true elsewhere) and in terms of its guarantee of admission to four-year schools with full credit for community-college graduates, the CUNY policy was clearly baccalaureate oriented. Indeed, when the open-admissions policy was being formulated, the relative value of B.A. and A.A. credentials was a major point of debate-- one that was resolved so that the chances of earning a B.A. would be facilitated.[10]

The initial studies covering the period, 1970-75, showed that although two-thirds or more of community-college entrants aspired to a bachelor's degree, rates of transfer to four-year schools were not impressive: for both regular and open-admissions students, less than 30 percent transferred. Minority students were less likely to do so than whites, even though they were equally likely to aspire to a B.A. degree. Of the relatively small proportion of transfers, only about a quarter received baccalaureates by 1975. Overall, rates of baccalaureate attainment among community college entrants were very low: around 10 percent. But another ten percent were persisting in senior colleges in 1975-- the end-point of our data, and still others, of course, remained in their original two-year schools, continuing work toward their A.A. degrees. Some two-year graduates may have tested the labor market before returning to try for a B.A. Given these possibilities, it is obvious that the time period covered by the original study was not adequate to clarify the role of the community colleges as a pathway to the baccalaureate.

Looked at in 1984, or more than a decade after these cohorts started in

community colleges, the original picture has changed, but not dramatically. Overall, about a third of regular students and a quarter of the open-admissions group earned bachelor's degrees (see Table 5). The CUNY policy of guaranteed senior-college admission for community-college graduates probably made some difference: those who first earned an A.A. were by far the most likely bachelor's recipients. A quarter of regular students and 15 percent of the open-admissions group traveled this route. Much smaller proportions leap-frogged to the B.A. without first earning their A.A.'s. But notwithstanding these successes, the fact is that even among Associate Degree recipients, less than half went on to earn a baccalaureate, and these proportions are well below the percentages aspiring to that degree when they first entered college.

Although CUNY's open-access policy distributed students more equally across its senior- and community-college tiers than had been true in other University systems, minority students were still overrepresented in the two-year schools (Lavin, Alba, & Silberstein, Ch. 4). These institutions are thus especially important avenues for minority students aspiring to baccalaureates. Although the educational aspirations of minority community-college students were as high as those of their white peers, attainment of the bachelor's degree was more limited for them than it was for whites. Among the latter almost 40 percent of regular students graduated from a senior college, while for blacks and Hispanics, graduates did not reach 30 percent (see Table 6). Among open-admissions students, where most of the minority students were to be found, whites were also more likely to earn bachelor's degrees-- 27 percent did so, compared with 19 percent of blacks and 16 percent of Hispanics.

Time is a factor that looms large in the baccalaureate attainments of

community-college entrants. If it was surprising to find that a quarter of open-admissions students entering senior-colleges required more than seven years to complete their studies, the proportions of community-college entrants needing this long are even more striking: 35 percent of the open-admissions contingent needed more than seven years from community college entry to earn their B.A.'s. A finding about Hispanics is especially stunning: 37 percent of the bachelor's degree holders needed more than nine years. Such figures are testimony to the dogged persistence of many who begin their college careers in two-year schools. But time also constitutes a burden. Community college students, and especially those from minority origins, are older at entry. Since it takes them longer to complete their degrees, by the time they have done so, they are even older relative to white graduates than when they started. As a result, they are undoubtedly less likely to contemplate going further to the higher levels of the educational system.

In light of the baccalaureate focus of CUNY's open-admissions policy and its aim of narrowing disparities in educational attainment between whites and minorities, how is one to assess these findings? One way is to gauge them in light of a national yardstick. Though comparable national data do not exist for the time period used in this study, Astin and his collaborators have completed a major effort to delineate the attainments of different ethnic and racial groups through the educational pipeline (Astin, et. al., 1982). They conclude that the superiority of whites over minorities in completion of the baccalaureate is attributable in part to the high concentration of minorities in community colleges. They note that although 75 percent of community college entrants indicate that they intend to get at least a bachelor's degree, their chances of actually transferring and completing a B.A. are slim. Indeed, even after controlling for differences in academic preparation and ethnicity,

community college students remain substantially less likely than four-year college entrants to earn a B.A., thus suggesting the presence of a community college "institutional effect" that depresses educational attainment.

Overall, the probabilities of minorities earning bachelor's degrees at CUNY are higher than is the case nationally. Partly this is due to the fact that minority students were less concentrated in two-year colleges under open admissions than they were nationally. And because CUNY is a single university system with an unusually permeable articulation between its tiers, CUNY's community-college entrants stood a better chance of moving on to the baccalaureate. So the relative success of CUNY's minority students is in part attributable to the effects of the open-admissions policy. But one must bear in mind that this success is only relative. The great majority of its community college students fell short of the baccalaureate. In their fundamentals, then, these CUNY data are in line with the national picture.

ULTIMATE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The 20th century has been a period of unprecedented educational expansion. Trow and others have described the transition from mass to universal secondary schooling that has occurred dramatically in the United States and other western societies (Trow, 1961: Hurn, 1985). This transition has been linked to equally dramatic rises in the proportions of cohorts entering higher education. One view has it that the growth of higher education is best understood as a response to the transformation from industrial to post-industrial society, bringing with it vast growth in more complex occupations and thus a need for a more highly educated population (Bell, 1973). Another view asserted most

notably by Randall Collins (1979), interprets this educational growth as not so much a response to the increasing complexity of work, but rather as an expression of status group competition. From this perspective, the quest for more and more educational credentials, called "educational inflation", has its roots in the efforts of more privileged groups to maintain their advantages at the same time that less privileged groups press their claims for equal educational opportunity. Whatever the merits of these different views, one fact is compatible with both of them: more advanced educational credentials are more valuable than less advanced ones. In this light, a major innovation such the CUNY open-admissions policy must be evaluated not only in terms of the extent to which new students were able to convert opportunity into A.A. and B.A. degrees, but also in terms of the extent to which the policy made possible the attainment of even more advanced degrees-- the ones requisite for entry to the more rewarding positions in American society.

Under open admissions, progress beyond the Bachelor's degree to the Master's, doctoral and professional levels was not a rare occurrence, though overwhelmingly, the graduate degrees were earned at the M.A. level (see Table 7). Proportions earning doctoral and professional degrees were generally quite small. The regularities one might expect, based on our earlier descriptions of findings, surface again. Senior-college students were far more likely to earn graduate degrees than were community-college entrants: the superiority of the former was often expressed by a factor of about 3 to 1. Among senior-college entrants, regular students earned graduate degrees more often than did open-admissions students. At the M.A. level the superiority of regular students was on the order to 2 to 1. The gap was much wider for advanced degrees, in one case approaching a 5 to 1 ratio in favor of regular students. Among community-college entrants, where smaller percentages of students earned higher degrees,

regular students were more likely to earn them, but their superiority over the open-admissions group was not as great as in the senior colleges.

There are consistent ethnic differences in favor of whites, especially at the senior colleges. However, these disparities are not generally as wide as those related to admissions status. At the M.A. level, blacks are only slightly below whites of the same admissions status, but Hispanics trail whites by a considerable margin: they are only about half as likely as whites to earn this degree. Ethnic differences in attainment of Ph.D's and advanced professional degrees are more substantial. Among regular students, almost 12 percent of whites went this far, compared with 6 percent of blacks and less than 2 percent of Hispanics. Among open-admissions students where only very small percentages of any ethnic group earned an advanced degree, whites were still almost three times more likely to do so than Hispanics and more than 1.5 times as likely as blacks.

As one would expect among community-college entrants, only small percentages in any ethnic category earned graduate degrees. Regular whites were consistently more likely to do so than blacks and Hispanics. Among open-admissions students ethnic differences are very narrow.

These findings reflect the ambiguities inherent in assessing an open-access policy in a multi-ethnic setting. On the one hand, it is clear that the disadvantages of minorities which first surface in our data on high school background, continued to accumulate at CUNY so that they did not go as far as their white counterparts. On the other hand, the expansion of educational opportunity made it possible for many students who would not otherwise have gone to college to work their way to upper rungs of the educational ladder.

This was especially true for minority open-admissions students, since CUNY was essentially their only college option. Whites, who typically had more economic resources, would, for the most part, have gone elsewhere in the absence of open admissions, and most who earned graduate degrees probably would have done so in any event. Thus, the open-admissions policy was fundamentally more critical for the educational chances of minorities.

These findings on graduate degrees at least help to clarify one of the more heated controversies surrounding open admissions. As we have noted earlier, many expressed a fear that lowering the access barriers would result in a serious erosion of the value of CUNY diplomas. We do not have all of the data required to know whether this happened. For example, one would need to know whether employers were less inclined to hire CUNY graduates after open admissions than they were before. But another indicator concerns the success of students in gaining entry to graduate schools outside the walls of CUNY, and yet another concerns how they fared after they were admitted. Though we lack the data for a full evaluation of these questions (we do not know, for example, how many students applied to various graduate schools, how many were admitted, and how this compares with the pre-open admissions era), we do know that of all graduate degrees earned, 65 percent at the M.A. level and 94 percent of advanced degrees were granted by universities outside CUNY. The fact that substantial numbers of students were admitted to graduate studies and met the standards set by other universities, at least suggests that the CUNY diploma continued to have considerable value after open admissions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In contemplating the success of open admissions in broadening educational opportunity, it is well to remember that although the policy benefitted all of the major ethnic constituencies in the New York City population, it was targeted primarily to economically and educationally disadvantaged minorities as its primary beneficiaries. If one thinks of the policy as the limiting case of what could be done by higher education to enhance opportunity (and it is empirically, though not theoretically, the limiting case), then it provides for policy makers an estimate of outcomes under optimal conditions.

Clearly, there is no easy bottom line statement to be made about the impact of open admissions on the educational attainments we have been reviewing. Minority students did less well at every step of the way. They were more likely to drop out of college without any degree, and if they earned an undergraduate diploma they were more likely to be found with an associate degree than were whites. Whatever the degree, typically it took them longer to earn it. Subsequently, they were less likely to be found among the ranks of Master's or advanced degree holders.

There are many reasons for the lower attainments of minorities. Blacks and Hispanics more often came from nonacademic high school tracks. By virtue of this, they were more likely to be placed in community colleges and, once there, in vocational curricula. Both factors lower the probability of earning a B.A.. Moreover, whether placed in a four- or two-year school, the weaker academic preparation of minorities increased their chances of placement in remedial programs which slowed down their progress in earning credits. Partly as a result, it took them longer to earn degrees. In addition, minority students

typically were older than their white counterparts when they began college. Considering their age at entry, and their slower academic progress, it is apparent that even if they earned a degree, they were even older relative to whites when they completed their work. They were thus subject to accumulating constraints of the life cycle-- pressures toward marriage and family and pressures to enter the job market on a full-time basis. Such constraints are ones that probably discouraged the maintenance of high educational aspirations. The traces of such discouragement are undoubtedly found in minorities' lower probabilities of earning graduate degrees. In sum, minority students carry a number of disadvantages with them on entry to college. These disadvantages create additional burdens in their collegiate careers. The end result is typically lower levels of educational attainment.

Even though open admissions did not eradicate ethnic differences in educational attainment, it did provide an important pathway to opportunity for minority students. To convey a sense of the magnitude of its effects, we have developed from Table 7 a set of projections to the populations involved. In the years 1970-1972, almost 103,000 students entered the University as first time freshmen.[11] About 57,000 of these students entered senior colleges, among them 22,000 open-admissions students (the ones who would not have qualified for a four-year college prior to 1970). About 46,000 students entered community colleges--28,000 as open-admissions students. For both levels of college, both admissions statuses within each level, and each ethnic group within each level, we have estimated the numbers in the population who earned each type of degree. Then we have aggregated open-admissions students in the four- and two-year schools. We have done the same for regular students. What is revealed by this procedure is the distribution of highest degrees earned by the population and the contribution of open admissions to the profile. The projections are shown

in Table 8.

Sixty-five thousand people who began as freshmen during the first three years of open admissions ultimately graduated from various levels of the higher education system. Nearly 25,000, or 38 percent of the total were open-admissions students. More than 19,000 completed a graduate program, a quarter of them coming from the open-admissions ranks.

Minority students benefitted dramatically in each degree category, with blacks generally receiving a greater boost than Hispanics. For example, while open admissions increased the number of white bachelor's degrees by almost half, it more than tripled the number of black baccalaureates, and almost doubled the number earned by Hispanics. The open-access program jumped white master's degrees by about 20 percent, but it almost tripled those for blacks and increased Hispanics' more than one and one-half times. It more than doubled the number of blacks who earned doctorates or other professional degrees, and almost doubled the number of Hispanics. Overall, more than 1,200 blacks and almost 400 Hispanics who earned a graduate degree had been admitted as open-admissions students.

These dramatic gains shifted the shares of degrees going to each group as well. While whites would have received 86 percent of B.A.'s in the absence of open admissions, their share of the pool declined to 77 percent when the degrees of open-admissions students are added to the total, and the share of B.A.'s going to blacks doubles when open-admissions students are added in. Effects are especially notable at the graduate level. With results limited to regular admissions students, whites hold 90 percent of master's and 95 percent of advanced degrees. Open-admissions worked to reduce this concentration by

increasing minority shares from 10 to 17 percent of M.A.'s, and from 5 to 10 percent of advanced degrees.

When one considers that the great majority of black and Hispanic open-admissions students would not have attended any college in the absence of the CUNY policy, it appears that the program had very important effects in enlarging the pool of college educated and professional minority men and women. If minority students were outdistanced by whites, this in large part reflects the educational and other disadvantages which are pervasive in society at large. These are disadvantages that a social intervention such as open admissions, coming at a relatively late stage in students' lives, could not entirely overcome.

We cannot leave this discussion of educational outcomes for college entrants of the early 1970s without alluding to the fiscal context in which they began, and in many cases, completed their undergraduate careers. Through 1975, CUNY students went to school with an optimal form of financial aid, free tuition, which not only encouraged many to go to college, but also helped them to persist. Thus, students who were pressed financially could cut back their course loads without penalty: they could balance work and school demands without being unduly forced to choose one or the other.

In 1976, in response to fiscal crisis, tuition was imposed at CUNY and the open-admissions policy was modified so that entry to senior colleges became more difficult, thus making the University an institution whose enrollments were more centered around its community colleges. Though financial aid programs partly offset the effects of tuition, they were based upon assumptions about the form of collegiate careers that bear little resemblance to the

realities we have portrayed. The flexibility of the early 1970s certainly has been lost, so that students more often find themselves in a bind, caught between conflicting demands of work and study. Partly as a result, persistence rates for cohorts of the 1980s have declined (Lavin, 1983; Lavin, Murtha, & Protash, 1983).

These developments at CUNY parallel the national scene in a broad way. During the early 1970s higher education participation rates and degree completion for blacks and Hispanics rose significantly, largely in response to increased federal aid (College Board, 1985:13). By 1980 the national data show that the gains of the early 1970s had begun to erode. College participation rates actually dropped from 1975 levels: from 32.0 to 27.8 percent for blacks and from 20.4 to 16.1 percent for Hispanics. These shifts correspond to a levelling off in federal aid to higher education. Black students, who more often come from low-income families, are especially vulnerable to cutbacks in financial aid: unaided blacks withdraw from college at rates nearly 20 percentage points higher than unaided whites (College Board, 1985:14). Thus, downward shifts and greater restrictiveness in aid will disproportionately affect black participation and degree attainment.

To recapture the gains of the early 1970s, financial aid programs need to be liberalized, not only with respect to amounts of support, but also in terms of flexibility. Programs need restructuring to provide greater support for those outside the upper-middle class: the single parent, the working couple young immigrant just in receipt of a high school equivalency diploma.

But while more is needed, federal aid to higher education faces sharp cutbacks. The Gramm-Rudman-Hollings legislation calls for a 4.3 percent cut in Pell

Grants and campus-based programs in the current year and a further cut of 25 percent in fiscal 1987 under the Reagan budget proposal (College Board, 1986). Students in urban universities will no doubt be disproportionately affected.

At a time when amounts of aid need to be increased and thought given to restructuring the system so as to align it better with the realities of educational careers that we have described, policy is moving in the opposite direction. As a result, it may well be that among the determinants of educational attainment, social origins and economic status will loom larger.

TABLES

TABLE 1

RATES OF BACCALAUREATE ATTAINMENT AS OF 1984 BY ADMISSIONS STATUS: SENIOR COLLEGES[a]

Admissions Status	On Time	After 5 Years	After 7 Years	After 9 Years	After 13[d] Years
Regular Students[b] (N=1589)	45	61	68	71	76
Open Admissions Students[c] (N=1065)	13	25	32	36	42

[a] Results for the 1970, 1971 and 1972 cohorts have been aggregated.

[b] Regular students are those with high school averages of 80 or higher.

[c] Open admissions students are those with high school averages of less than 80.

[d] After 14 years for 1970 cohort, 13 years for 1971, and 12 years for 1972.

TABLE 2

RATES OF ASSOCIATE DEGREE ATTAINMENT AS OF 1984 BY ADMISSIONS STATUS: COMMUNITY COLLEGES[a]

Admissions Status	On Time	After 3 Years	After 5 Years	After 7 Years	After 9 Years	After 13[d] Years
Regular Students[b] (N=734)	26	45	51	54	55	58
Open Admissions Students[c] (N=1220)	10	23	30	33	35	38

[a] Results for the 1970, 1971 and 1972 cohorts have been aggregated.

[b] Regular students are those with high school averages of 75 or higher.

[c] Open admissions students are those with high school averages of less than 75.

[d] After 14 years for 1970 cohort, 13 years for 1971, and 12 years for 1972.

TABLE 3

RATES OF BACCALAUREATE ATTAINMENT AS OF 1984 BY ETHNICITY AND ADMISSIONS STATUS: SENIOR COLLEGES[a]

		On Time	After 5 Years	After 7 Years	After 9 Years	After 13[d] Years
Regular Students:[b]						
White	(n = 1335)	49	65	72	74	79
Black	(n = 76)	22	37	50	58	64
Hispanic	(n = 113)	21	33	38	42	50
Open Admissions Students:[c]						
White	(n = 598)	17	33	39	45	48
Black	(n = 258)	8	16	23	25	37
Hispanic	(n = 124)	7	12	18	21	28

[a] Results for the 1970, 1971 and 1972 cohorts have been aggregated.

[b] Regular students are those with high school averages of 80 or higher.

[c] Open admissions students are those with high school averages of less than 80.

[d] After 14 years for 1970 cohort, 13 years for 1971, and 12 years for 1972.

TABLE 4

RATES OF ASSOCIATE DEGREE ATTAINMENT AS OF 1984 BY ETHNICITY AND ADMISSIONS STATUS: COMMUNITY COLLEGES[a]

	On Time	After 3 Years	After 5 Years	After 7 Years	After 9 Years	After 13[d] Years
Regular Students[b]						
White (N = 482)	31	48	54	56	57	60
Black (N = 109)	15	37	45	51	53	57
Hispanic (N = 111)	18	34	41	44	45	47
Open Admissions Students[c]						
White (N = 575)	13	28	34	36	38	40
Black (N = 395)	8	20	28	31	34	37
Hispanic (N = 193)	7	15	22	25	28	34

[a] Results for the 1970, 1971 and 1972 cohorts have been aggregated.

[b] Regular students are those with high school averages of 75 or higher.

[c] Open admissions students are those with high school averages of less than 75

[d] After 14 years for 1970 cohort, 13 years for 1971, and 12 years for 1972.

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENTRANTS GRADUATING FROM FOUR YEAR COLLEGES THROUGH 1984 BY ADMISSIONS STATUS AND ATTAINMENT OF ASSOCIATE DEGREE

	REGULAR			OPEN		
B.A. Degree	Earned A.A.	Did Not Earn A.A.	Total	Earned A.A.	Did Not Earn A.A.	Total
Earned	25	10	35	15	8	23
Not Earned	28	37	65	21	56	77
			(N=841)			(N=1357)

TABLE 6

PERCENTAGE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENTRANTS GRADUATING FROM FOUR YEAR COLLEGES THROUGH 1984 BY ADMISSIONS STATUS, ATTAINMENT OF ASSOCIATE DEGREE, AND ETHNICITY

		EARNED A.A.		DID NOT EARN A.A.	
Admissions Status		Earned B.A.	Did Not Earn B.A.	Earned B.A.	Did Not Earn B.A.
Regular:					
White	(N=562)	26	28	12	34
Black	(N=120)	25	32	4	39
Hispanic	(N=122)	19	27	6	48
Open:					
White	(N=648)	18	20	9	53
Black	(N=434)	13	23	6	57
Hispanic	(N=207)	13	22	3	61

TABLE 7

HIGHEST DEGREE EARNED AS OF 1984 BY LEVEL OF COLLEGE ENTERED, ADMISSIONS STATUS, AND ETHNICITY

Highest Degree	SENIOR		COMMUNITY	
	Regular	Open	Regular	Open
None:				
White	14%	39%	33%	51%
Black	28	56	38	55
Hispanic	38	57	48	58
A.A.				
White	5	9	28	21
Black	4	6	32	24
Hispanic	10	14	27	25
B.A.:				
White	42	36	27	22
Black	40	26	23	16
Hispanic	37	21	20	14
M.A.:				
White	27	14	10	4
Black	23	11	5	4
Hispanic	14	8	5	3
Advanced:				
White	11.6	2.3	2.5	1.3
Black	6	1.4	1.5	1.4
Hispanic	1.7	0.8	0	0.7

TABLE 8

PROJECTED IMPACT OF OPEN ADMISSIONS ON DEGREE ATTAINMENT AS OF 1984
FOR 1970, 1971, AND 1972 COHORT POPULATIONS

	Regular	Open	Percentage Increase (Open/Regular)	Share of Total Degrees: Regular Only	Share of Total Degrees: Regular & Open
A.A.:					
White	5080	4126	81	72%	61%
Black	943	2588	274	13%	23%
Hispanic	993	1434	144	14%	16%
	7016	8148		100%	100%
B.A.:					
White	16301	7928	49	86%	77%
Black	1287	3105	241	7%	14%
Hispanic	1461	1161	79	8%	8%
	19049	12194		100%	100%
M.A.:					
White	9391	2452	26	90%	84%
Black	509	999	196	5%	11%
Hispanic	492	333	68	5%	6%
	10392	3784		100%	100%
Advanced:					
White	3869	505	13	95%	90%
Black	141	228	162	4%	8%
Hispanic	56	50	89	1%	2%
	4066	783		100%	100%
Total	40523	24909	62		

NOTES

1. Data for the California system are presented in Jaffee and Adams (1971).

2. This is reported in Table 4.2, p. 128 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1982).

3. A previous study (Lavin, Murtha, and Kaufman, 1984) extended the time period for analyzing graduation among the 1970 and 1971 cohorts. It did this by searching official CUNY graduation files through 1982. This study differs from the one described here in that we now have data through 1984, graduation data now include degrees earned outside of CUNY (previous studies classified transfers as dropouts), and results for the 1972 cohort have been added. This sample which contains about 5,000 respondents, has a greater proportion of academically able students than does the population. Consequently, insofar as we have been able to compare graduation rates between population and sample (for the time period up to 1975, where we have graduation data for the population), it is clear that the proportion of graduates is higher in the sample. In order to adjust for this, we have carried out a weighting procedure using a measure, common to both population and sample (the measure, average credits earned per semester in attendance), that is a good predictor of graduation status. When this adjustment is applied to the sample, graduation rates align more closely with the population. Overall, we estimate that graduation rates in the sample exceed those in the population by about 5 percentage points. We have no reason to believe that there is any inflation of the proportions of graduates earning degrees 6-14 years after entry.

4. Open admissions students are defined as follows: In the senior colleges they are students with high school averages (in college preparatory courses) of less than 80. Regular students earned high school averages of 80 or higher. In community colleges the open admissions category is composed of students with high school averages of less than 75. Regular students are those with averages of 75 or higher.

5. White students are comprised mainly of white Catholics of Irish and Italian ancestry, and of Jewish students. Ninety percent of Hispanic students are of Puerto Rican background.

6. These percentages are calculated from the data in table 1 in the following manner: The 11 year graduation rate was divided into the five year rate for each category. Subtracting the resulting ratio from 100 gives the percentage of graduates who took more than 5 years to graduate.

7. These ratios were calculated as follows: in a given year the graduation rate for regular students was divided by the rate for open admissions students. For example, after 5 years the regular student rate was 61 percent and the open admissions rate was 25 percent. The former is 2.4 times the latter.

8. Students who began at a community college and who earned a bachelor's

degree before earning an Associate's are not included in the base for calculating community college graduation rates. These students are included in Tables 5 and 6 which show the percentages of community college entrants who earned the baccalaureate.

9. Among the important writings pertinent to this debate, see Alba and Lavin (1981); Bowles and Gintis (1976); Clark (1960); Karabel (1972); Lavin, Alba, and Silberstein (1981, Ch. 8); London (1978); Pincus (1980); and Velez (1985).

10. The University appointed a commission to help in developing an admissions policy. A variety of constituencies were represented. Minority members were very concerned about possible tracking of minority students into community colleges. As they stated: "Less than fifty percent of Black and Puerto Rican students who enter high school graduate; the majority of the survivors fall in the bottom halves of their classes, with large numbers graduating with averages below seventy (70). What, one must ask, will be their earning capacities and ability to provide for their families twenty years hence, in competition with their white contemporaries who will have gone to the senior colleges and graduate schools? What will be their relative earning capacities even if they finish two-year career programs in community colleges and go on to become X-Ray technicians and low-level managers in factories? In short, we see unending societal clash unless this vicious educational cycle is smashed. We propose to do this...by giving all high school graduates a fair and equal chance to achieve a B.A. degree." (University Commission on Admissions, p. 62).

11. This figure does not include students admitted through the University's special admissions programs called SEEK and College Discovery.

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